

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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To: HQ **From: Belfast**
For: Second Secretary O hUiginn **From: Joint Secretary**

PST; PSS; Messrs. Teahon, Donlon & Dalton; Ambassadors London & Washington; Joint Secretary; Counsellors A-I

Subj: Update on Coalisland

1. In response to our queries about the progress of the RUC investigation into last week's Coalisland shooting, the British side have provided the following explanation of the incident which they have received from the security forces. They have asked us to treat this information in the strictest confidence.

2. Acting on intelligence received about a threatened attack on the RUC/Army base, British Army soldiers from an unspecified unit (on which my British colleague was unwilling to elaborate) observed two men going down a lane at the back of the base last Wednesday evening. Moments later, two explosions were heard. According to my British colleague, the forensic experts had not identified prior to Easter (though they may have done so in the interim) the exact nature of the devices used. Hence the absence of the expected RUC statement before Easter confirming a terrorist attack and providing details.

3. Immediately after the explosions, the two men reappeared running from the lane. One of them had his face obscured by a scarf. The other appeared to be wearing rubber gloves. The soldiers challenged the men and fired a warning shot. When one of them (now known to be Malachy Doris) appeared to be about to draw a firearm, the soldiers fired a round at him which struck him in the abdomen. They apprehended him on the ground. The other man fled to a waiting car, which drove him off at speed.

4. At this point, a hostile crowd began to appear. Some of them broke away and headed to a roundabout on the outskirts of Coalisland, which they blocked for the purpose (as the security forces see it) of facilitating the getaway of the car. The rest threatened the soldiers who were standing over Doris. The soldiers fired warning shots (my British colleague understood this to mean above the heads of the crowd)

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and threw stun grenades at them until the RUC arrived. The latter fired plastic bullets at the crowd.

5. The speed with which the crowd appeared, and the deployment of some of them to the roundabout, suggested to the security forces that local Republicans had organised their involvement in conjunction with the attack.

6. As regards the Fr Rice aspect, the circumstances in which a bullet struck his car have not yet been clarified and form part of the continuing RUC inquiry.

7. We have asked a number of questions arising from this account. We noted no evidence that Doris was in fact carrying a gun (to which the British response is that the security forces merely need to have a "reasonable belief" that this was the case). We also queried the characterisation of the crowd as a "rent-a-mob" adjunct to an IRA operation, noting that persons as impeccable as Jim Canning had been prominent witnesses of the incident and presumably part of the same crowd. We will be pursuing these and other aspects of the incident with the British side.

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